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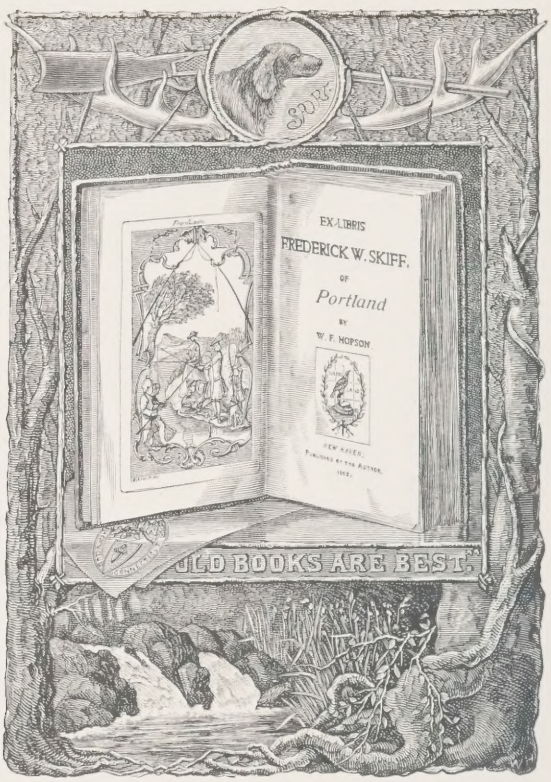
To Frederick W. Skiff
from John Young Nash



Edwin Martin Parrott from
Kenneth Bechtel 2/55

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The Book Club of California

At the time when Edwin Markham's famous poem, "The Man with the Hoe," was published by the Club through the gracious permission of the author, it was suggested that a reproduction of the painting that inspired the verses would add to the interest of the book. Mr. Alexander F. Morrison was kind enough to secure from Mr. William H. Crocker, the owner of Millet's masterpiece, the privilege of having it photographed. Mr. Gabriel Moulin was entrusted with this task, and as a result of his efforts, a beautiful print of "The Man with the Hoe" is furnished to accompany each volume of the Club edition.

1118 Stanyan Street
San Francisco
August 14, 1915

My dear Albert M. Bender:

After all these years I am having the hardihood to change a word in my poem, "The Man with the Hoe." In the last line of the second stanza, I am changing menace to danger. This will clarify and energize the line. Please make this correction in the reprint of the Hoe-poem now under way.

Your friend—always!

Edwin Markham.

THE MAN WITH THE HOE

BY

EDWIN MARKHAM

WRITTEN AFTER SEEING MILLET'S
WORLD-FAMOUS
PAINTING

So God made man in His
own image, in the image of God
made He him.
Genesis 1: 27.

SAN FRANCISCO
THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA
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A COMMENT BY THE POET

IN WRITING *my poem, "The Man with the Hoe," I took my hint from a painting with this name by the great François Millet. I hoped to breathe into the lines the spirit of brotherhood, the spirit of social humanity.*

The Hoe-man is not every man with a hoe: he is the man under the hoofs of the labor world. He is the slave of drudgery because he is the victim of industrial oppression. He is the man bowed by his brute burden. He is the man with no time to rest, no time to think, no time to lift his face to the stars.

The Hoe-poem is not a protest against labor: it is a protest against drudgery, against oppression. For under right conditions labor is beautiful and holy. What is true labor? It is not the sorrow of man: it is the joy of man.

It is not man's curse: it is man's beatitude. There is a certain sacredness in all accomplished work—a clean kettle, a plowed field, a road of roses, a sculptured Apollo, a lighted city, a song to the morning star. Labor is to man what song is to the bird: it is the glad expression of the creative spirit, the desire to build the beautiful.

All true labor is not only a joy in the heart, but it is also a shaping energy creating the temple of character that is rising hour by hour within us. It matters, and it matters mightily, how we do our work, whether it be work of hand or work of brain. Wherever a man is putting mind into muscle, he is unconsciously molding his own inward spirit: he is shaping his future, he is driving home the rivets of fate. If he builds ugliness, he is building ugliness into the temple of his character. If he builds beauty, with joy in the making of it, he is building beauty into the fabric of his soul. A man's labor is a silent but tremendous force in the issues of his life in this world and in all worlds.

So all true labor is a sacrament: it brings us into touch with the Divine Carpenter, with Christ the Artizan, with Him who said, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." Labor brings us into touch with the Star-Builder, and with all the high gods that guard and command the stars. Labor is a divine joy bestowed upon all worlds, all heavens, all eternities.

But while labor is a divine joy, drudgery is an infernal burden. While right labor builds up the spiritual element in man, drudgery destroys that spiritual element, effaces the image of God. So in the Hoe-man I saw the distortion of man—not the beautiful form that God made. This man was not made by the Divine Artist, for the Perfect can make only the perfect. Every seed, every form of life is perfect when it comes newly from the creative hand. So this Hoe-man is not the work of any God: "he is the man-made savage of civilization."

Millet's "Man with the Hoe" is to me the most solemnly

impressive of all modern paintings. As I look upon the august ruin that it pictures, I dare to think that it surpasses the power of Michael Angelo. It comes wrapt around with more terror than the fearsome shapes in Dante. This Hoeman is on earth: he walks among us, walks bowed and scarred and silent.

For an hour I stood before the painting, absorbing the majesty of its despair, the tremendous import of its admonition. I stood there, the power and terror of the thing growing upon my heart, the pity and sorrow of it eating into my soul. It came to me with a strange echo of the world-sorrow—came with its pitiless pathos and mournful grandeur.

I soon realized that Millet puts before us no chance toiler, no mere man of the fields. No; this stunned and stolid peasant is the type of industrial oppression in all lands and in all labors. He might be a man with a needle in a New York sweat-shop, a man with a pick in a West

Virginia coal-mine, a man with a hod in a London alley, a man with a spade on the banks of the Zuyder Zee.

The Hoe-man is a symbol of betrayed humanity, the Toiler ground down through long ages of oppression, through ages of social injustice. His struggle extends backward into the shadowy gulfs of antiquity. He is the symbol of the millions that lifted the Tower of Babel on the plains of Shinar, the millions that came to the building of the Pyramids, the millions that lifted wearily the walls of Ilium, hollowed out the Catacombs and paved the Appian Way.

All down the iron ages the Hoe-man has been robbed of his rights by the selfish Few. Some day, in the rise of the Social Passion, this beast-man will come into his own: he will be given the material and social resources necessary for living a complete life. And a complete life resides in the possession of three things, the three great needs of man—Bread, Beauty and Brotherhood. In that New Time the

State will become the organ of Fraternity. Then will the Hoe-man evolve out of his brutehood, his jaw will be remolded, his brow will be lifted, and his mind will be lighted with a star.

EDWIN MARKHAM.

New York City, N. Y., December, 1915.

THE MAN WITH THE HOE

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
The emptiness of ages in his face,
And on his back the burden of the world.
Who made him dead to rapture and despair,
A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,
Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?
Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?
Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?
Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?
Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave
To have dominion over sea and land;
To trace the stars and search the heavens for power;
To feel the passion of Eternity?
Is this the dream He dreamed who shaped the suns

And marked their ways upon the ancient deep?
Down all the stretch of Hell to its last gulf
There is no shape more terrible than this—
More tongued with censure of the world's blind greed—
More filled with signs and portents for the soul—
More fraught with danger to the universe.

What gulfs between him and the seraphim!
Slave of the wheel of labor, what to him
Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades?
What the long reaches of the peaks of song,
The rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose?
Through this dread shape the suffering ages look;
Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop;
Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,
Plundered, profaned and disinherited,
Cries protest to the Judges of the World,
A protest that is also prophecy.

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
Is this the handiwork you give to God,
This monstrous thing distorted and soul-quenched?
How will you ever straighten up this shape;
Touch it again with immortality;
Give back the upward looking and the light;
Rebuild in it the music and the dream;
Make right the immemorial infamies,
Perfidious wrongs, immedicable woes?

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
How will the Future reckon with this Man?
How answer his brute question in that hour
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake the world?
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings—
With those who shaped him to the thing he is—
When this dumb Terror shall reply to God,
After the silence of the centuries?

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